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STARS hung low in the blue-black sky. The air was soft and gentle, with only the faintest breeze stirring. The lonely river crept silently by as if bent on evil deeds.

It was a perfect night for romance-or

The black silhouette of the lone rider was a perfect target. A gun barket. The rider tumbled from the horse and lay still in the tall reads near the river. A low bird-like whistle sounded. Almost at once the silence the silence of the right specific properties of the right specific properties. The right specific properties of th

"Tony's dead," said the tall man with the leathery face and the brush-like, iron gray hair. "We all know what he was like. As brave a man as ever forked a saddle. A smart hombre and a good fighter in any tough spot. And just about the quickest draw and best marksman that ever belonged to the border patrol. But they got him just the same."

He paused as if to let the full significance sink in to the small circle of men.

"We've got only a handful of men to patrol a stretch of river that's as long as from here to the moon, seems like," be continued. "We can't expect reinforcements for days, maybe weeks. Meanwhile, as our forces get fewer, the rustlers get more plentiful, No use palavering, we can't stand up and fight them man to man. We've got to think up some way to outfox them. And pronto!"

He looked around inquiringly at the men of the border parts. At length, Plinto Clemens spoke up in his squeaky, high voice. "I've got an idea. Capp." he said. "We could have somebody out in the river in a rowboat. He'd he per tus to be partialing on shore and they can hear the hoof beats whenever we're coming, But somebody in a boat could hardly be seen or heard, and he could spot anything that was egging on ashore and signal the rest of ux." BADMEN
Somebody ruffawed, It was Deke Lettch.

Somebody guffawed. It was Deke Letch. Some of the others chuckled, too. "What's the matter. Letch, don't you cater

to the idea?" asked Cap, sternly.

"It's plumb loco, if you ask me!" he declared.
"A boat! What's Pinto trying to do? Turn us
into a herd of dry land sailors? Me. I feel
plumb undressed if I'm not wearing a saddle
under me. I never heard tell of going after
rustlers in a boat."
"Neither did I." agreed Cap.

Pinto, looking down at his high-heeled

boots, seemed crestfailen.

"I never heard of it and I reckon the rustlers never heard of it either. That makes it a good idea. It'll be a surprise to them when we try it, tonight!" concluded Cap.

INTO crouched low in the boat and let it drift with the stream. He didn't want to risk even the slight creak of the oarlocks. He was amazed at how clearly the shore sounds defrated to him in midstream. It was as if the water made a sounding board.

His ears perked at the unmistkable sound of many hoofs, Shod hoofs It meant the horse thieves were busy again, taking full advantage of the dark of the moon. He reckoned the sound to be a quarter of a mile downstream, so he straightened a little and began pulling strongly on the oars. While the rust-lers were driving, their own clatter would drown out the oar splash, he figured.

He had not disped the oars three times when a fusilade of shots ripped toward him from the nearer bank. The little boat was riddled with slugs. Other border patrolmen, hearing the gunfier, converged on the spot in time to see the small craft wobble and sink. Meanwhile, a quarter of a mile away, the rustlers were making another crossing unmolessted.

"Well, that's the end of the brainy boat idea!" said Deke Letch, gazing across the river. "And it's the end of Pinto, too."

"I'm afraid it is," said Cap sadly, removing his hat.

his hat.

"The poor boy meant well," continued Letch,
"but a horseman is plumb loco when he gets
any ideas about riding some other kind of
cayuse, especially a boat. That's the end of
Pinto!"

His tone was meant to be sad, but he couldn't conceal the feeling of "I told you so" in his voice. "It's not the end of Pinto!" said a dripping

figure, emerging from the water.

"Pinto!" exclaimed Cap.
"Pinto!" exclaimed Letch and the others.

"Yes, they shot the boat right out from under me, but they didn't even scratch yours truly," asserted Pinto. "Somebody got lucky and spotted me. But I'm still sure this is a

good idea and I'm going out in another boat tomorrow night."
"Oh, no!" said Cap. "Too dangerous. I'm certain sure the rustlers have a spy who knows our plans. They knew you'd be out there to-

night and they ambushed you. You were lucky. But tomorrow you might not be!"

But Pinto set his squeaky voice to work defending his idea, and finally Cap agreed to one more try.

TWO men crouched low in the reeds near the river bank, peering out into the darkness. "There it is," whispered one as he made out the combact delifies in milesteen and look

out the rowboat, drifting in midstream slowly toward them. The other raised a rifle. " "Wait!" said his companion. "Let him get nearer!"

"I will," said the rifleman. "Just wanted to

try my sight."
They waited.

"I've got to admit that boat idea is pretty slick," said one in a low voice. "It could have spoiled our whole game—if we hadn't been tipped off!"

The other chuckled. "That's right, it could have."

Closer and closer drifted the boat.

One of the watchers whispered, "That's him, huddled up in the middle like a poke of hog feed. Get him! Are you ready?"

"Ready!" said the riffernan.

"Wait for the signal!"

It came in a moment. A whistle, mournful

as from a nocturnal bird. The rifleman drew a bead on the rowboat and squeezed the trigger. The crack of the rifle was followed by a

blinding flash and a thunderous explosion. The little rowboat turned to sudden, searing flame, lighting up the broad river. Rockets and flares shot skyward.

Stolen horses, that had been headed for the river to swim across the border and be sold at fancy prices, were filled with fright by the awesome sight. Whinnying and screaming they turned and charged in many directions. Some of the tuttlers, trying vainly to stop them, were unseated.

Others, who tried to flee, found themselves rushing into the waiting arms—and guns—of well-prepared border guards.

Catching his breath, the rifleman said to his companion, "Something's wrong! We'd better run for it?"

"You'd better?" said the other. "But not me!
I'll just mingle with the patrol again!"

O YOU won't!" said a voice from behind. The pair whirled to face the business ends of two Colts held by Pinto Clemens. "Reach high! And quick?"

The rifle plunked to the ground as both men

obeyed.
"You've got me wrong, Pinto." whined one
of the men. "I was just about to arrest this

warmint."
"Deke Letch!" bellowed the rifleman, "you're

the biggest liar since-"
"Hush un!" ordered Pinto, "I knew some-

body was traitoring the border patrol and I sort of figured it'd be Letch. Last night, when my rowboat got turned into a sieve with me in it. all the other patrolmen rode up with their boxes panning, But yours, Letch, wanti breathing hard. You didn't have to ride fast to get to the shots because you were the one who did the shooting."

"That's right, he did," snarled the rifleman.
"So tonight," continued Pinto. "I filled up
the new boat with dynamite and fireworks. It
was a trap—and you boys set it off your-

THE END

















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the Germenet rids close need on what bright are left, we can consider the Germenet rids close need on what bright are left, and only so many are allowed to be hunted every so often or they a be pland sextent. The only time I ever hunted them was about five years apo, We booted Indian style, using bons and arrows instead of rifles.
"Une day we societed a Small herd a way off and as we

approached item, they freat us as if they were making their last stand against him; crowled of if he face of the earth. The leader of the land, as we came closes, began parming hing clouds; out of the land, as we came closes, began parming hing clouds; out of the control of the land, as we came closes, began parming hing clouds; out of the resident and parming death. He would be rest of the kind were particular and parming death. He would be rest of the kind were particular and particular death. He would be rest of the kind were particular and the land of the land he were particular and the land of the land he was particular and the land of the land he l

Husting is all right, paratures, but stucks, I couldn't hill an animal, just as Les couldn't, and I know you pards trait your parts and all the animals just as kindly. Just as I treat my pardner, Black Jack. Well, it looks as if I'm running out of space on this page, so who have all Ils and Goodby for this time and mosey the

Yours for more action,
Your pals,
Allan "Rocky" Lane
on and Black Jack U



ROCKY LANE WESTERN

THE CHARLES AND THE CONTROL OF A CONT



THE UNSMITTING POER KEPT SQUINTING FIRST AT ONE WALL OF THE ARROYO, THEN AT THE OTHER? IT WAS ACKNOWN AS THOUGHT HE COULD SWELL THE DAMAGE.

BUT THE DRYGULCHERS WERE TOO WI HODEN! AND BY NOW THEY HAD HU IN THEIR SIGHTS...











TEX
KNIGHT
HEARD
THE MAN
GOMING UP
BEHIND HIM,
BUT NEVER
DREAMED
WHAT HEHAD
IN MIND!
THE MAN
SWINKS...
TEX'S KNEES

TURNED RUBBERY... THEN HE BLACKED OUT...



WHEN HE CAME TO, HIS EYES WERE STILL BLURRED WITH PAIN -- AND COULDN'T MAKE OUT THE MAN WHO WAS BENDING OVER HUM...



















NOBODY'S SMARTER THAN THE LAW, SON! BUT HOW'S THE LAW EVER GOIN' TO MATCH WITS WITH WRONSDOERS IF REPORT THEM? HOW YOU GO BACK TO YOUR RANCH AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF THOSE BIRDS!

THOSE WERE STRONG WORDS

TEX KNIGHT HAD SPOKEN IN THAT SUNBAKED ARROYO - SC HOW COME, MORE THAN THREE MONTHS LATER, THE GANG WIN T'LL GO NUTS IF WE DON'T 300N! HEY,

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, SUMPTHIN' THAT LIKELY TO BRING YUH A HEAP OF MONEY, GAMBLIN'MAN PERVIDIN'I GIT MY PROPER GUT...

THIS WAY OUR LUCK HAPPENS THARS A RANNY I KNOW WHO'S LOADED DOWN UP LATELY, OPEN FOR. GREENBACKS THAN A COYOTE GOT FLEAS, AN' GAME THAT RANNY LIKES, IT'S NO-LIMIT POKER!





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